

UConn and UConn Health Follow Up Responses
Appropriations Committee Informational Hearing – 8/28/20
Impact of COVID-19 on Agency Budgets
September 24, 2020

- 1) **UConn - Rep. Nolan requested the names of UConn students by city (or at least the students from New London), who have been negatively affected by COVID, in order to potentially send care packages to the students. UConn indicated during the meeting that it would be possible to generate a report of the number of financial aid recipients by legislative district and compare it to last year's report, to get a sense of the change in circumstances by town. Please provide this information.**

Response:

Based on federal law the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (also known as FERPA) the University is prohibited from sharing the personal information requested. We can provide high level aggregated information by town/district (Senate and House). We hope to have this information to you by mid-October. The information will include the following for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years where applicable:

- The number of aid recipients and average award amounts district by district/town by town
- The number of policy exception & special circumstances grant recipients and average award amounts district by district/town by town
- CARES Grants recipients and average award amounts district by district/town by town (awarded for 2019/20 only)

- 2) **UConn – Representative Haddad – Please provide more detail on the impact of the cuts and reductions being made, including the types and number of employees impacted.**

Response:

Prior to COVID, to balance the FY21 budget, University departments were cut by 3% - 4%, totaling \$25M. As a result of the global pandemic, UConn and UConn Health are facing the largest budget shortfalls in our 130 year history – now totaling \$73.8M at UConn. An additional \$48M in cuts will also be implemented across the University leaving a deficit of \$26M. If this shortfall were to include the State unfunded legacy costs at \$30.9M, the shortfall and request for state support grows to \$57M and \$87M with an early closure.

More specifically, cuts made to address the deficit which impact departments, students, and employees directly include:

- Senior Management: 24 Furlough Days
- Management: 12 Furlough Days
- Elimination: 4 sports
- Cancellation of library journal subscriptions
- Elimination of certain adjunct/contract faculty
- Reduction of elective course offerings

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- Stopped accepting new students to the adult learning master's program at the NEAG School of Education
- A reduction in staff at the Extension Service of the College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources
- Cancellation of the development of new programming in the Masters of Social Work program
- Discontinuation of the woodwind and conducting programs in the School of Fine Arts
- Reduction of 100 student worker positions
- Reductions in graduate research and teaching assistants -- jobs that many students need to afford their educations
- Reduction of facilities services including waste removal, proactive equipment upgrades, routine maintenance
- Implementing a hiring and spending freeze with exceptions for filling critical positions impacting academics, research and operations. The following employee categories have dropped in FTE count since March, 2020:

Employee Category	FTE reductions
Administrative Clerical	(3.82)
Managerial	(4.39)
Graduate Assistants/Interns*	(13.61)
Protective Services (Police/Fire)	(10.10)
Postdoctoral Research Assoc	(3.20)
	(35.12)
*One fulltime Grad Assistant = .50 FTE	

- 3) **UCH – Rep. Walker - Are enhanced Medicaid and Medicare payments being received by UConn Health? If yes, when did this begin; and if no, do you know why, and what could be done to remedy the situation?**

Response:

UConn Health did not receive funding from the 6.2% increase in state Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

However, the CARES Act provided for a 20% add-on to the Medicare inpatient prospective Diagnosis-Related Group (DRG) rate for COVID-19 patients for the duration of the public health emergency, equating to an estimated \$250,000 in additional revenue for UConn Health. Similarly, CT Medicaid provided for a 20% add-on for patients for a COVID-19 discharge, resulting in another \$250,815 in additional revenue for UConn Health.

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- 4) **UCH - Describe the amount of PPE on-hand by type and compare your supplies to: (1) what is needed on a typical day (recently), and (2) what would be needed to cope with a COVID-19 surge of comparable size to what was experienced in the spring.**

Response:

Please note that the PPE market is very fluid and subject to many factors outside of UConn Health's control. Our answers below reflect our current PPE supply and our best estimates on utilization in the months ahead.

PPE On-Hand and Typical Utilization:

- *Masks:* We continue to work to procure appropriate levels of masks. This is complicated by the need for everyone (employees, students, patients and visitors) on campus to be masked when in close proximity to others. As such, our mask usage varies with the number/density of people on campus. As we continue to grow our services back to pre-pandemic levels and bring staff back on site, we expect UConn Health will see continued increased usage. At the same time, supply lines remain uncertain due to schools and other recovering businesses across multiple sectors such as manufacturing and health services coming back online alongside certain manufacturers shifting production capacity to non-sterile supplies with greater margins. These factors and others are now adding to global demand and in some cases are offsetting any increased supply chain capacity. At this time, we feel comfortable that we are able to adequately supply UConn Health for the next 90 days while we continue to work to procure more masks.
- *Coverings - includes items such as gloves, gowns, hair bonnets, shoe coverings, and face shields.* These items are typically used only in patient care or research settings. However, locating and procuring these items has proven difficult and we have been actively pursuing secondary vendors who may not be on state contract, which exposes us to increased market driven prices. We recently placed a large, special order with our primary vendor that is expected later this month. If/when this arrives we feel that we would have a sustainable supply for over 90 days though we will continue to watch the market for purchasing opportunities.
- *Other - includes supplies such as foam hand sanitizer, alcohol based sanitizer, disinfecting supplies, etc.* These items continue to be a challenge to procure and our current stock estimates are more month to month. We do have supplies in house to start making hand sanitizer if the need arises.

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PPE Needs in COVID-19 Surge:

- As we look to fall, any anticipated spike must also account for normal seasonal flu activity as well. In that regard, we estimate that our current supply reserves would be further taxed by both an increase in Influenza/Coronavirus inpatient rule outs as well as greater outpatient and testing volumes. Given the current conservation measures UConn Health has enacted and the expected continued presence of Battelle (an N95 mask sanitizing service) through the fall, we currently estimate that we would have enough capacity to meet operational obligations through December. We continuously look for replenishment opportunities as well.

5) UConn/UCH – Senator Osten - The Yale School of Management is working with school districts on the municipal level to provide expertise on how they can handle COVID-19. Do UConn and UConn Health have any similar initiatives/partnerships with the State, municipalities or other groups?

Response:

Throughout the pandemic, UConn and UConn Health faculty, staff and students have been assisting colleagues across our campuses, the State and local communities with COVID related activities. Efforts and activities are wide ranging including a) the development of emergency ventilators, production of hand sanitizer, and support for expanding testing; b) research on how human behavior and environmental factors interact to exacerbate disease including coronavirus; c) partnering with dairy processors to secure dairy donations and mobilize volunteers to distribute to food pantries statewide; d) providing communication expertise to the Willington School District on their reopening plans; e) wide ranging efforts from medical and dental students helping to expand services for COVID patients; f) efforts countering the impact of health disparities for minority communities as well as anti-Asian racism associated with the virus; and g) masters in social work students interning this fall with the Hartford Public Schools and 7 other alliance school districts working toward improved social and emotional development exacerbated by the pandemic. Additional detail and examples are noted below.

- a) UConn has supported food insecurity needs that have been exacerbated by COVID through operation community impact from the College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources as well as a joint project from the School of Education and the Department of Human Development and Family Studies exploring school food service continuation through the pandemic.
- b) UConn also has supported School districts in their reopening planning through the pandemic. As one example, faculty from the Department of Communication worked closely with the Willington School District on their reopening plans with a focus on avoiding communication pitfalls in answering questions from other parents and in handling disinformation circulating online.
- c) Faculty from the School of Pharmacy in partnership with Hartford Health Care have been supporting the expansion of COVID testing services throughout the State.

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- d) The School of Social Work is developing several programs staffed by social work interns in partnership with the Hartford Public School System working closely with families who have been hit hardest by the pandemic in terms of education disruption and its impact on social and emotional development. A related project also studying developmental impact of the virus is being conducted by faculty in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies involves a partnership with EASTCONN's Early Head Start/Head Start.
- e) Specific to the social and mental health impact of COVID, important projects have come from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences including a) the Pandemic Journaling Project which provides a chance to address the mental health impact of COVID (journaling is a empirically supported strategy to helps folks cope in a traumatic time); b) work from the College's Cultural Institutes has focused on understanding and countering the impact of health disparities for minority communities as well as anti-Asian racism associated with the virus; c) a research project with the CT Fair Housing Center to map the spatial variability of evictions, small claims, and foreclosures due to COVID-19 among vulnerable communities of CT; and d) a partnership with the CT Office of Early Childhood, Family Support Service Division exploring supervision and service delivery challenges in light of social distancing requirements.
- f) UConn Health's clinical operations leveraged their electronic medical records system to facilitate statewide testing, and provided testing for pre-operative and pre-procedure patients, the UConn community (student athletes, students and employees), and symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals in the greater community. Partners include the Jackson Laboratory, UConn, Miss Porters, Avon Old Farms, Cheshire Academy and DEEP firefighters returning from California. Clinical staff also collaborated with the Department of Correction to provide them with support for their care of COVID-19 positive inmates. Working with the State and National Guard, UConn Health repurposed physical space in the Connecticut tower and on the 7th floor of the University Tower to provide a surge capacity of 243 beds. This additional capacity was in excess of the bed surge capacity that was already identified within the hospital.
- g) The Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine have both developed programs to expand services in the State given the otherwise reduced medical and dental services available throughout Connecticut resulting from COVID. In particular, the Urban Service Track/AHEC scholars program, which represents a select group of students enrolled in the UConn Schools of Pharmacy, Nursing, Medicine, Dental Medicine, Social Work, and Quinnipiac University's Physician Assistant Program that focus on prevention and primary care in Connecticut's urban underserved communities, engaged in multiple contact tracking, surveillance, and testing activities across the State. These efforts included conducting over 500 wellness checks calls with seniors and other vulnerable groups; assessing COVID-19 positive patients or individuals who are self-quarantining for symptoms or symptom severity; referring individuals to medical homes or 911 as appropriate; providing CDC guidance as to isolation and cleaning; and performing a basic needs gaps assessment (access to food, water, shelter, electricity, medications, etc.) assessing mental/emotional state and risk of domestic violence); and assisting with pop-up testing. These students conducted more than 400

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calls assisting UConn Health with its COVID tele-surveillance effort. Planning is underway for a “drive through” health promotion event to distribute educational materials on COVID/flu, masks, thermometers and hand sanitizer to seniors. Partners have included the Hartford Department of Health and Human Services, federally qualified health centers, and independent living centers.

In addition, a compilation of articles showcasing a number of COVID related research efforts and activities can be found here: <https://research.uconn.edu/covid-19-research-and-grants/> - some may be duplicative of what is captured in the list above. Of note, there are at least 17 active federally funded research projects taking place across the University.

6) UConn/UCH – Rep. Walker – Is the State reimbursing UConn and UConn Health for the cost of testing?

Response:

UConn - UConn’s expected student and employee COVID-19 testing costs in FY21 will be between \$2.5M-\$5.0M. Initially the State committed to reimbursing for testing as recommended by CT DPH – Surveillance Testing of residential students. UConn’s testing program is more expansive, and includes regular testing of faculty, staff, and commuter students. We have been working with the State to identify the level of funding that they will commit.

UConn Health - Pursuant to the State’s COVID-19 testing program, UConn Health has undertaken asymptomatic employee testing, and OPM has committed to reimbursing these costs. UConn Health is conducting its own collection and testing on-site and estimates the cost of this testing to be \$484,240, based on one-time tests for 2,779 eligible front line employees and weekly testing for 23 employees that require work at nursing homes.